

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q I'm interested in buying a Palm smartphone, but you don't rate the Blazer web browser. Does Palm have plans to improve its browser, and are there alternative browsers I can try in the meantime?

A There probably won't be a new version of Blazer until the release of Palm OS 6, which has now been delayed until the end of 2008. In the meantime, there are two alternatives, but both are far from perfect.

WapUniverse supports tabbed browsing, but is still very much in beta. You can download it from www.wapuniverse.com/downloads/UniverseBeta.zip. The browser is currently being rewritten from the ground up, so keep an eye on <http://blog.openmobi.com> for developments.

The other alternative is the Palm version of Opera Mini (www.opera.com). Some versions require the Palm OS Java Virtual Machine, which you can download from <http://palmone.r3h.net/downloads.palmone.com/JVM.zip>. Opera is a good browser, but it crashed occasionally in our tests.

Chris Finnamore
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MAGELLAN Maestro 4245

★★★★★

£215 inc VAT
From www.play.com

Many satnavs can direct you to the nearest petrol station or calculate a detour at the touch of a couple of buttons, but that involves taking your eyes off the road and your hand off the steering wheel. Magellan's Maestro 4245 aims to circumvent this problem by using voice recognition, allowing you to command the unit with your voice on the move.

The 4245 comes with both dashboard and windscreen mounts, which is useful if your car's dashboard is particularly deep. The Maestro's screen is incredibly bright, and the interface is easy to use. To find your destination you can enter a postcode or type in a town or street name on the large onscreen keyboard.

Once you've chosen your destination, you're presented with a summary screen that lets you choose between the shortest and fastest routes, how much you want to use motorways and whether or not you want to avoid toll roads. Having these features presented to you at this point is a nice touch, as they're usually buried in the settings menu.

On the road, the 4245 is an excellent navigator. Its navigation screen is very clear and it's easy to see where you're going. Voice prompts are also clear and given in plenty of time. Clicking the icon showing the next turn brings up a turn-by-turn summary of your route, and you can flick through the route and click on roads to exclude from the journey. This is useful for avoiding known traffic blackspots on your route. You have to pay extra for a TMC receiver to give you traffic updates, however.

The 4245 has a couple of handy features to help you navigate. When you're approaching a junction, the interface splits in half to show the



animated map on the right and a 3D map of the upcoming junction on the left. The junction map means you always know what's coming up, and is particularly useful at large roundabouts. The text-to-speech feature means the 4245 reads out the name of the road you're about to turn into, which, along with the junction map, means you're unlikely to take the wrong road. We've seen text-to-speech before, but the 4245's pronunciation is much more natural and easier to understand than most.

To activate the voice recognition feature, you need to say "Magellan" to the unit. This brings up a list of options, such as finding the nearest restaurant or petrol station. You then say another set phrase such as "Nearest restaurant" to be presented with a numbered list, and then say a number to navigate to that destination automatically. This often worked well, but

at other times was infuriatingly slow to respond. In the end we preferred using the touch screen.

Even though its voice recognition is hit and miss, Magellan's Maestro 4245 is an excellent navigator. If you really need traffic information you should buy TomTom's similarly priced Go 720T, but otherwise you won't be disappointed with the Maestro 4245.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Clear navigation display
- ✓ Good value
- ✗ Unreliable voice recognition

STANDALONE SATNAV 4.4in, 432x240 display, integrated SiRFstar III receiver, Magellan NavStreets software, Europe maps, Bluetooth handsfree support
PART CODE Maestro 4245
DETAILS www.magellangps.com

Also consider...

TOMTOM Go 720

★★★★★

£200 inc VAT
From www.play.com

COMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

PRICE CUT!

TomTom's Go 720 is an excellent navigator with full maps of Western Europe, a large screen and clear voice prompts. Its most impressive aspect is the Map Share feature, which lets you correct map errors on the device and even upload them to TomTom's servers for other TomTom owners to download. It also has Bluetooth, an FM transmitter and voice recognition, all of which make it the best satnav available.



STANDALONE SATNAV 4.3in 480x272 resolution LCD, TomTom Navigator software, TeleAtlas Western European maps, 2GB internal storage, SD card slot, Bluetooth, FM transmitter, 118x24x83mm, 220g
PART CODE 1M00.760 DETAILS www.tomtom.com
FULL REVIEW Nov 2007

APPLE iPhone

★★★★★

£269 on £35-per-month contract
From <http://store.apple.com/Apple/WebObjects/ukstore>



Even after all the hype, the iPhone doesn't disappoint. It's a hugely capable smartphone with a superbly designed interface, powerful messaging capabilities and the best smartphone web browser available. It's not perfect – the recessed headphone socket means you can't use your own headphones without an ugly adaptor, and the internet browser is hobbled by the lack of 3G. It will also cost you £900 over the 18-month contract. However, it's still the best smartphone we've seen.

SMARTPHONE Quad-band GSM, GPRS, EDGE, 3½in 320x480-resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 8GB storage, USB, Bluetooth, 802.11b/g connectivity, eight hours' talktime, 10 days' standby, 135g
PART CODE MB213B/A DETAILS www.apple.com/uk
FULL REVIEW Mar 2008

PALM Centro

★★★★★

Free on £25-per-month contract
From www.expansys.com

Palm was once a dominant force in the handhelds market, but until recently, development of the Palm operating system had all but stalled. The company has even started making Windows Mobile handsets, such as the Treo 500v (see 'Also consider...', below). The new Centro is the first Palm smartphone we've seen for a year that uses Palm OS.

Like the Windows Mobile-powered 500v, the Centro has a full QWERTY keypad, but it also has a touch screen and stylus. You can control most of the phone's functions with the directional keypad, but the stylus makes it easier to use certain applications such as the calendar. The Centro has a small 2.2in screen, so you have to be accurate with the stylus to avoid selecting the wrong option. The keypad's keys are rubbery and more pleasant to use than the 500v's hard plastic ones, but the keypad is small and the keys are close together, so it's easy to make typing errors. The built-in 1.3-megapixel camera is poor, taking blurry, low-resolution photos.

The Centro runs Palm OS 5.4.9. Palm OS 5 was originally launched in 2002, so the interface is showing its age. It's not particularly attractive, but runs quickly. Palm OS takes some getting used to, as it's not a multitasking operating system like Windows Mobile. You can have one program open at a time, so instead of pressing the hang-up key to return to the home screen, you have to switch



between whichever program is open at any one time.

The Centro's Blazer web browser is also fairly primitive. It's fast and fine for mobile-optimised web pages, but struggles with anything more complicated and feels years behind Pocket Internet Explorer and Nokia's Symbian Series 60 browser. There are limited alternatives for Palm OS (see FAQ, left, for details).

Fortunately, there are some powerful preinstalled programs. Calendar is easy to use and fast, while the email wizard takes you through setting up the phone to receive IMAP or POP3 email. Text messages are arranged in chat threads, so it's easy to keep track of conversations. Like the 500v, the Centro has Google Maps installed, and maps load quickly even over the phone's slow GPRS data connection. It's possible to view and edit Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents, and there's even support for Office 2007's new OpenXML file formats; you'll have no problem with email attachments.

Palm's Centro is a compact and fast smartphone with an excellent calendar and comprehensive document support. Its web browser is poor, though. Palm's Treo 500v is a better all-round smartphone, but if you want an organisational tool and aren't too worried about web browsing, the Centro is a good-value alternative.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Responsive operating system
- ✓ Good document support
- ✗ Poor web browser

SMARTPHONE GSM 850/900/1800/1900, GPRS, EDGE, 2.2in 320x320 resolution LCD, 1.3-megapixel camera, 64MB storage, USB, Bluetooth, IR connectivity, 3½ hours talktime, 12½ days standby, 120g
PART CODE 1057EU
DETAILS www.palm.com

CHOOSING A... Smartphone

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

STYLE: Handset

BANDS: GSM 900/1,800/1,900

SCREEN: 240x320; 65,536 colours

INPUT: Keypad

CAMERA: 1.3 megapixel

BLUETOOTH: Yes

DATA CALLS: GPRS

Recommended minimum in grey

1 A smartphone's operating system – Palm OS, Windows Mobile or Symbian – dictates its basic features and what third-party software you can install. Windows Mobile 6.0 has the familiar look and feel of Windows, right down to a Start button, and is found on both handset- and PDA-style smartphones.

The only Palm OS smartphones available are Palm's Treo 680 and Centro. There are four types of Symbian operating systems: series 60, 80, 90 and UIQ. Series 60, 80 and 90 are found on Nokia smartphones, while Sony Ericsson uses UIQ for its P900 smartphone series. Windows Mobile 6.0, Palm OS and Symbian all support third-party applications, and there is a vast amount of both freeware and commercial software available.

Symbian is often heavily customised by the phone's manufacturer and so may differ from phone to phone.

2 All smartphones come with a colour screen. A high-colour depth of 65,536 colours is important for viewing photos or video clips.

Users navigate and input information into a handset type of smartphone using the keypad and buttons or a jog dial. PDA-style smartphones usually have a touch screen, and both Windows Mobile and Palm have handwriting recognition features as well as onscreen keyboards. A few have a built-in QWERTY keyboard.

3 Cameras are common in smartphones. Resolution is limited, with three megapixels being the best you'll get. However, as most images will be viewed only onscreen or sent as video messages, this shouldn't be a problem for most people.

4 Bluetooth makes it easier to link your phone to a PC for synchronisation or wireless web access. For internet access, a GPRS or 3G mobile contract is essential. Data is usually billed per megabyte downloaded, but if you sign up for a data bundle when buying your smartphone it will work out cheaper.

ARCHOS 405

★★★★★

£99 inc VAT

From www.kikatek.com

Archos's latest budget portable media player replaces the 404.

Unlike the 404, it has 2GB of flash storage instead of a 30GB hard disk, but it can take up to 16GB of extra storage in its SDHC card slot. The player is easy to use, and video looks good on the bright and clear screen. It's good value, and will become better value as SDHC cards drop in price.



PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2GB storage, SDHC card slot, plays MPEG4 (DivX, XviD), WMV, MPEG1 and MPEG2 with optional plug-in (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, protected WMA, Wav, AAC with optional plug-in, five hours' video playback, 16 hours' audio playback, USB2, 100x13x78mm, 146g PART CODE 105914EU V2
DETAILS www.archos.com FULL REVIEW Jan 2008

PALM Treo 500v

★★★★★

Free on £20-per-month contract

From www.vodafone.co.uk

Palm's Treo 500v is a great-looking Windows Mobile phone with a QWERTY keyboard. Palm has heavily customised the operating system, so it's far simpler to use than most Windows Mobile phones. The keyboard is easy to use, and the Google Maps and Messenger applications are particularly useful. It's also free on a cheap mobile contract, which makes it great value.

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY



SMARTPHONE Tri-band, 3G, GPRS, 2½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 150MB storage, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth connectivity, 4½ hours' talk time, 10 days' standby, 120g PART CODE 1060IE-VFN DETAILS www.palm.com
REVIEW Dec 2007